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Granadan Reflections

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granadan reflections

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a practice of historical reflection grounded in the city of Granada's aesthetic and architectural heritage. From the publication of Washington Irving's *Tales of Alhambra*, in 1823, up through today, Granada has been a highly celebrated destination for travelers and tourists, drawn by the sublimity of its romantic oriental splendor. Yet, although the city is well known for the Orientalist fantasy it puts on display for touristic consumption, here I consider a form of reflection that cannot be encompassed within the protocols of discourse and experience mobilized by the tourist industry, and that indeed, may challenge those protocols and the assumptions about history and geography they entail. Specifically, drawing on the work of the late-nineteenth-century Spanish writer, Angel Ganivet, I trace a tradition of reflection that engages the city's unique sensory and architectural configuration as the basis from which to reassess Spain's relation to both Islam and Europe. I conclude with some general observations on the way the sensory and material infrastructure of Moorish Spain mediates and conditions the possibilities of finding a place for Islam in the country today.

Keywords: Spain, history, romanticism, orientalism, ganivet, islam.

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In the final moment of Italo Calvino's *Invisible cities*, Kublai Khan wonders despairingly if the route traced by the succession of cities described to him by his interlocutor, the explorer Marco Polo, did not lead, "in ever narrowing circles," to the "infernal city"—a figure perhaps signaling Calvino's own despair over the dystopian direction of modern life. Marco Polo's response is as follows:

> The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space. (Calvino 1997, 165)

While the first escape might be called "historicism," a mode of knowledge that legitimates, and hence naturalizes, the present, it is the second that interests me here: that "vigilance and apprehension" that does not flee from the dense reality of the spaces it surveys into the realm of fantasy, but painstakingly seeks out and excavates valuable potentialities and forms that make up hidden (invisible) dimensions of the present, and "gives them space." These forms appear fantastical from the eschatological standpoint of "the inferno where we live everyday," but they are, nonetheless, integral—if difficult to recognize—elements of everyday existence and essential to its possible redemption.

The city I am concerned with in this essay, and for which I have invoked Marco Polo's council, is Granada. Nestled against the often snow-covered peaks of the Sierra Nevada, Granada is renowned for both its natural and architectural beauty, embodied most spectacularly in its Moorish-era monuments (see Figure 1). The heart of the city is formed by two opposing hillsides, their descending slopes intersecting at the rumbling waters of the Darro River. On one of the hilltops above the river sits the vast complex of the Alhambra, Spain's most popular monument among tourists and a stunning accomplishment of medieval Muslim art and architecture.

On the opposing hill ascends the neighborhood of Albayzin, its winding cobblestone streets lined with houses (called *carmenes*) oriented around interior gardens, a pattern that echoes a style found in some of the old quarters of Middle Eastern cities. The city's configuration of architectural, aesthetic, and natural elements, sedimented into a unique historical mélange, has inspired writers, poets, and musicians for centuries, with Washington Irving's Romantic tales of the Alhambra, written in 1823, being perhaps the most

FIG 1
Contemporary view of the Alhambra from the Albayzin. Photo: S. Brent Plate.

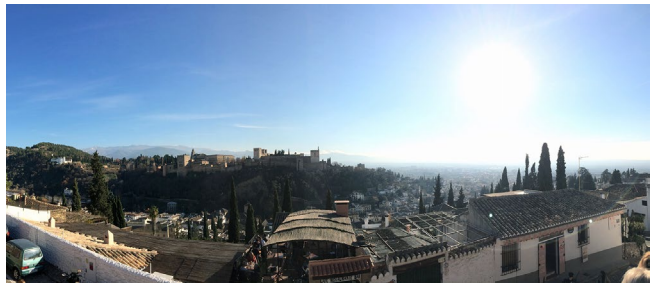
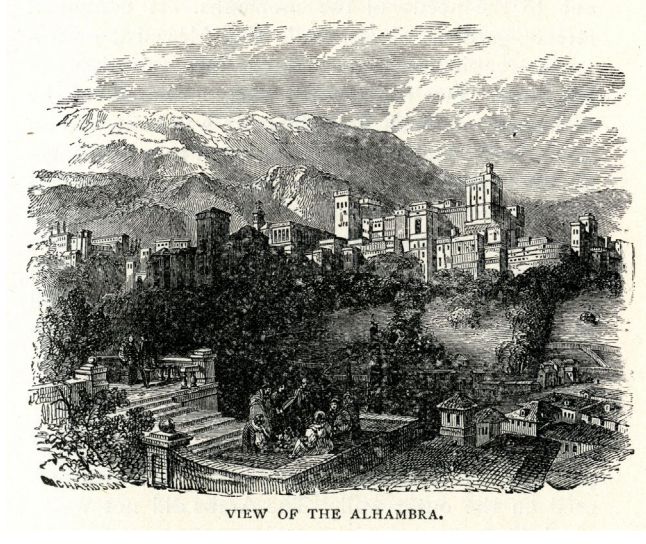


FIG 2
Nineteenth-century view of the Alhambra.



well-known literary treatment. Indeed, there are few approaches to the city that do not pass through the Orientalist fantasies of countless writers, artists, and travel agents, an imaginary extension like a thick gauze over the hotels, monuments, and tourist attractions that form the backbone of its economy (see Figure 2).

My interest here, however, is not in Granada's economy of tourism, one which historicizes the heterogeneous spaces of the city so as to maximize their market value as sites of touristic consumption. Rather, the question I pose concerns Granada's relation to "Andalucismo," or Andalusianism, a genre of Spanish discourse founded on the principle that contemporary Andalusia is historically continuous with al-Andalus, medieval Islamic Iberia, and that the challenges faced by Andalusians today require a recognition of that historical identity.[1] Andalucismo first emerged in the late nineteenth century as a movement among a small group of intellectuals who, confronted with the sense of national malaise provoked by the loss of Spain's overseas empire and the country's state of economic and political weakness, began to seek out

resources of national renewal in the nation's past, and in the folkloric traditions where that past still lived on. For some of these thinkers, a reflection on Andalusian traditions led directly to a reconsideration and reevaluation of the Moorish inheritance within contemporary Andalusia, particularly in regard to literary and aesthetic arenas. By the second decade of the twentieth century, this movement of cultural recuperation pioneered by *fin de siècle* intellectuals became directly linked to a politics of regional autonomy, a movement that was already well developed in other parts of Spain, notably Cataluña and the Basque Country. In ordinary Spanish usage, "historical Andalucismo" (*Andalucismo historico*) refers to this regional nationalist movement. As a genre of historical discourse, Andalucismo has from its inception always wandered along the border of academic respectability, a suspect mode of knowledge production, too passionately attached to its object of reflection on the one hand, and too enmeshed in the political realities of its time on the other. For the majority of contemporary Spanish scholars, this discourse remains mired in a romantic fictionalization of the past, one encouraged and sustained by the ideological service it provides to a variety of political ambitions.[2]

In this essay I provide a different reading of Andalucismo, one emphasizing the role of Granada's dense historical palimpsest in its emergence and development. To this end, I focus on the life and work of the late-nineteenth-century Spanish writer, Angel Ganivet, an intellectual whose articulation of what could be called a Granadan perspective on Spanish modernity became a necessary reference point for subsequent generations of Andalusistas, from Federico Garcia Lorca to Juan Goytisolo. My inquiry focuses on how the sensorium of this city, with its unique historical weave, imprinted itself on Ganivet's life and thought, opening up certain possibilities of historical and political reflection while occluding others. These possibilities, I argue, were not inspired in the city's illustrious past, as distant models to be recuperated, but embedded in its historical and material fabric, in the forms of experience that this fabric reflexively structured. Overall, my exploration of Ganivet's life centers on the question, what alternative cartographies of Spain, of Europe, and of the Middle East does Granada inscribe upon the surface of our geopolitical landscape?

Displaying the sensibilities of a Marco Polo, Ganivet carefully attended to the cultural mélange of the medieval and the modern, the Moorish and the Catholic that fashioned the Granada of his day, providing him with the standpoint for a critical engagement with various dimensions of modern life. Across the following pages I note some of the ways his writing works through the historical density of the city, including

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what he identified as its Arab and Islamic dimensions, drawing sustenance from a lived intimacy with the forms of life he saw as unique to the city. Across this itinerary I trace the workings of a style of thinking that disrupts the polarizing logic that opposes the West to the Middle East, that finds one a pinnacle of modernity, the other a failed variant, one a beacon of humanistic values, the other a threat to those values, one committed to peace, the other mired in endless violence.

Ganivet is a founding figure in a tradition of historical and political reflection that finds expression today in a wide variety of cultural and political projects, most (though not all) recognizably liberal. Many of these projects concern the protection and expansion of immigrants' rights in Spain and invoke the country's plurireligious past in order to counter contemporary anti-foreigner attitudes, seen by many as a longstanding legacy embedded within Spain's social mores and political culture. Such pro-immigrant political projects are easily recognizable within the framework of contemporary European liberalism. Romantic invocations of medieval society, similarly, are readily assimilated to the rhetorical imaginary of liberal multiculturalism. While not denying the importance of liberal traditions in the formation of such forms of political activism in Spain today, my goal here is to propose a somewhat different genealogy of the sensibilities that have given shape to some of these political projects, and to locate those sensibilities within the aesthetic and architectural cityscape of Granada.

Above, I spoke of the "dense history" of Granada, a phrase that deserves further comment. An obvious dimension of this density lies in the fact that few other cities in Europe exhibit in such spectacular fashion the lineaments of a medieval Mediterranean society, prominently on display in its Islamic and Christian monuments.

However, the weighty presence of history in Granada and in the region more broadly is due to the way medieval Iberia fits awkwardly within the historical narratives of the Spanish nation and its Europeanizing career. This stems, in part, from the inadequacy of the analytical tools of modern historiography—a discipline forged in the caldron of nineteenth-century nationalist ideology—to the hybrid cultural and linguistic forms characteristic of medieval Mediterranean societies (see Mallette 2010). It also reflects, more importantly for my purposes, the exteriority of Islam to the narratives that define both Spanish national identity and the civilizational identity of Europe more broadly (see Asad 2003). Although Spain, throughout much of its history, has been viewed by its neighbors to the north as more "Oriental" than European, and has at times even produced historical and fictional literature in which its entwinement with the Middle East has been

positively valorized, al-Andalus has largely remained a contingent historical event for the nation, a digression along its trajectory, rather than an element essential to its modern identity. For these reasons, al-Andalus has retained a kind of uncanny presence, one that cannot be put to rest by the historiographical operation that would secure its home in a distant past and immunize the present from its demands. As the thinker I explore below was keen to note, its restless ghosts haunt the streets and monuments of Granada, whispering, in their sadness, to those who will listen, tales of a different modernity and a different Europe.

The Romantic City

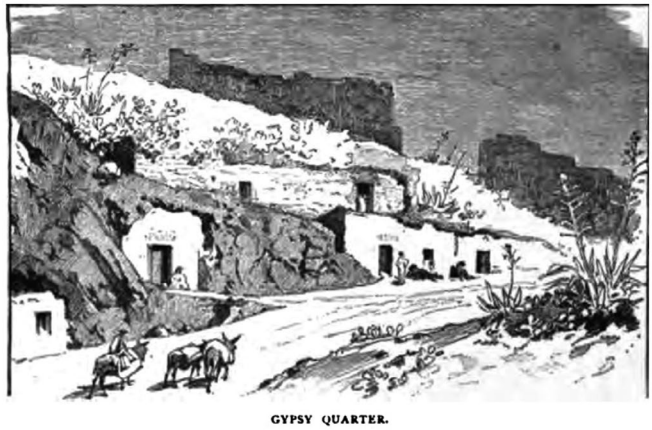
Before I turn to the Granada of Ganivet, I want to briefly highlight some aspects of the contemporary reception of the tradition of reflection he helped to found. Those who speak or write about the city of Granada's Arabic and Islamic configuration necessarily encounter a particular suspicion, located within both the academy and popular Spanish opinion: namely, that their words have fallen prey to the seductions of Orientalism, to the lure of "maurofilia", to the spell of the city's romantic image, one profitably engendered by the fantasy machine of the Andalusian tourist industry. Or even worse: that one has "gone native," like the region's many converts to Islam. Given the city government's intense investment in its Oriental image—most visible in the scores of Middle-Eastern-styled tea shops with water pipes and belly dancers, and the countless stores offering the kitsch of nineteenth-century Orientalist dreams—this suspicion is not surprising (see Figures 3 and 4).

What interests me here, however, is the regulatory function this form of scrutiny enacts within scholarly and popular discourses. For this suspicion, in my view, serves to uphold an unstated rule, that the city's Islamic past only speaks to and inhabits its present in the modalities of romantic fantasy, myth, or nostalgia.[3] Applied to any discourse on Granada not authorized by the protocols of positivist historiography by which the pastness of the past is secured, these terms police the city's temporal walls, ensuring that no foreign (i.e. Middle-Eastern) elements cross the border where they might make a claim on the present social, political, and religious order.

A statement by the Granadan anthropologist Jose Antonio Gonzalez Alcantud may serve as an example of the judgment I am concerned with here. A scholar whose academic trajectory has been profoundly (though not exclusively) marked by a series of intellectual engagements with the city of his birth, Gonzalez Alcantud is one of the most knowledgeable and perceptive scholars of Andalucismo working on the topic today.

FIG 3
Contemporary image from the Albayzin. Photo: Dennis Dewey.

FIG 4
Nineteenth-century image from the Albayzin.



GYPSY QUARTER.

There are moments, however, when his otherwise patient and meticulous style of cultural and historical analysis veers in a more strident direction, as in the following quotation: "and let us not forget that our particular Orient [i.e. Andalusia] became entirely Western, with the disappearance of memory and the loss of any relation to the Moorish past that is not purely phantasmatic" (Gonzalez Alcantud 2005, 37). Occurring in a book dedicated to exploring the complicated layers of memory and history that have shaped the city of Granada, this categorical statement—one we must "not forget," must keep before us as we read—appears as a red light, warning us not to be seduced by the historical tapestry we are surveying into thinking that we stand in some actual (nonphantasmatic) relation to the Moorish world, or, by extension, to the Muslim and Jewish societies that were essential to its formation.[4] It is intended to catch us, midway into a narrative that moves complicatedly across time as it explores the citations,

recuperations, and silences that linked post-1498 Granada to its prior moments, to remind us that, despite appearances to the contrary, the Moorish past is gone. The statement, clear and categorical as it is, carries more weight (including, perhaps, that of the concept of European civilization) than it can bear. Why is al-Andalus, the al-Andalus we speak of today, "purely phantasmatic"? Would we say ancient Greece, whose philosophers and artists continue to populate our academic syllabi, is only a phantasm? So the question becomes, what makes the Moorish past so singularly ghostlike?

The insistence that Andalusia is "entirely Western" (i.e. European) is also worth noting here. No other European city so powerfully throws into question the notion of "entirely Western"—of a Europe whose formative history is entirely its own-as does Granada. Recourse here to the intensifier "entirely" in the context of Granada, I would suggest, points to the friction the city exerts on its European pedigree and the anxieties such friction continues to generate within Spain today. The contrast set up by Gonzalez Alcantud between a phantasmatic space, the Moorish past, and a real one, the West, is symptomatic of a European discourse that secures the historical and conceptual immunity of Europe from the Middle East.[5] Within this European discourse, one does not interrogate the myth or fantasy, the historical sleight of hand, which allows one to refer to the West, without qualification, as a coherent political space entirely itself. Whatever "the West" refers to here, however, it is clear that the Moorish period does not inhabit it, except as a phantasm of Europe's own imagination.

A similar analytical operation underlies the historian Eric Calderwood's exploration of what he, following Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012), calls the invention of Granada's Andalusi legacy by those seeking to preserve and promote the city's cultural patrimony. Calderwood focuses on the activities of the Legado Andalusí Foundation, an institution funded by the Junta Andalusia, the state's agency of cultural affairs. He begins by noting that the concept of an Andalusian legacy, the object of the Foundation's activities, is of modern origin. Because the modern notion of a cultural legacy has its origins in nineteenth-century Romanticism, the aim to "preserve" a historical legacy, he suggests, must necessarily be historically inaccurate, or rather, the legacy sought must first be "invented." As he notes:

> The Legado Andalusí takes from the nineteenth-century Romantics, such as Washington Irving, the desire to *invent* al-Andalus: that is, to discover it underneath the surface of Andalucía's daily life and then to recreate it—in this case, in order to promote tolerant *convivencia* between the various peoples of the Mediterranean. (Calderwood 2014, 36, italics in the original)

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This drive to invent a fictitious al-Andalus, goes the argument, is a product of Andalucismo, a term intended here to indicate the nationalist movement originating in the late nineteenth century with the aim of promoting Andalusian culture and securing greater autonomy for the region in its relations with the Spanish state. The Legado Andalusí's claim to be concerned with Granada's historical entwinement with Islam and the Middle East, in other words, is revealed to be nothing more than an ideological ruse of modern nationalism, an easily debunked artifact of European cultural politics. Here, similar to that noted above in relation to Gonzalez Alcantud's claim, Granada's relation to its past is exhaustively determined by the temporality of cultural nationalism and its romantic myths. Points of tension and ambivalence within such contemporary historical discourses are left unexamined. Just as the fences set up on the borders hold back the influx of North Africans seeking to enter Spain, such scholarly scrutiny ensures that none will enter from the past.

Critical scrutiny of the temporal borders of Granada is not just a vocation of academics. In the years I have spent as a visitor in Spain, it was very rare that I had a conversation about Granada without the terms "romantic" or "nostalgic" quickly imposing themselves on the discourse, as if to protect my interlocutors and myself from the danger that some other relation to the past might be unleashed; or as if Spain's belated but successful entry into the pantheon of European nations was at stake, its banishment once again to the status of an exotic, oriental backwater just around the corner. The country's current economic struggles have only intensified this fear. And while a recent generation of Spaniards have gradually come to accept the Moorish period as part of their own past, that acceptance frequently takes the form of a double gesture: the claim that al-Andalus was an immensely consequential period for the development of Spain, that it is irrelevant to the country's present, and that therefore those who today make claims in its name are romantics and ideologues, purveyors of untruth and deception for political and financial goals. Within Spain today, for example, school children have recently, and for the first time, begun to learn that al-Andalus was a shining moment in their own history, having left its imprint in their language, their architecture, their literature, and, simultaneously, that it has almost nothing to do with their lives as Spaniards and members of the European community. This unique balancing act, an achievement of Spain's multicultural educational policies of the socialist government (and partially dismembered by the subsequent conservative party), is one artifact of the unique form of historical skepticism evoked by al-Andalus.

My point here is not that traditions of Orientalism, Romanticism, and nationalism have not had a profound impact on the physiognomy of the city and the way it is perceived by both visitors and residents. It is the stronger claim that there is no relation to the Moorish past that does not conform in its entirety to the discursive protocols of these nineteenth-century movements, that is not the machination of a suspect European knowledge, that strikes me as untenable. "Granada," it is often said, "exerts a powerful force on the imagination." Implicit in such a statement, however, is that the home of that imagination, the fertile garden from which it grew, is not the hybrid city, forged in the caldron of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian relations, but further to the north, in Germany, whose Romantics made a decisive and celebrated contribution to the intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual formation of European civilization and, moreover, confirmed yet again its origins in ancient Greece. But Granada, as the Granadan whose life I trace below attests, is home to its own traditions, receptacle of its own creative resources. Among those resources is the ability to fracture the oppositional schema that regulate the civilizational boundaries of Europe and the Middle East, boundaries invoked today whenever Western values, histories, and traditions are reaffirmed in the face of a growing population of Muslim immigrants.

The Ganivetian Chronotope

Born in Granada in 1865, Angel Ganivet was one of the leading luminaries of the intellectual world of late nineteenth-century Spain. Writing in a period of great economic and political decline, one whose culmination was marked by Spain's loss of most of its colonial possessions at the conclusion of the Spanish–American war in 1898, Ganivet and his contemporaries—often referred to as the "generation of 98"—dedicated much of their intellectual efforts to a diagnosis of the causes of Spanish weakness and decay. For a number of these thinkers, the pathway of renewal required an exhumation of a Spanish *Volksgeist*, a project that required mining the country's past for models that could exemplify and animate a national spirit. In Ganivet's view, to unearth this core dimension of Spanish existence required an investigation into the anthropology of everyday life of the Spanish countryside, and an attentiveness to the traces of earlier historical moments embedded within local practices, customs, and myths.[6] His native Granada became the site of this investigation.

Much has been written about Ganivet's political views, their debt to Kantian idealism, German Romanticism, and Spanish nationalism.[7] It is his debt to Granada, however, that I want to highlight, the significance of the city in the devel-

opment of his aesthetic and political perspectives. Indeed, Ganivet himself understood much of his thought to be a direct expression of the city, a city that had "modeled" him, initiating him into "the secret of its own spirit" (Ganivet 1896, 20).

In contrast to his better-known colleague and interlocutor, Miguel Unamuno, and to the mainstream of Spanish intellectual opinion among the generations that followed, Ganivet was a consistent critic of the notion of the superiority of European civilization.[8] Echoing Romantic critiques of the spiritual poverty of modern European society's utilitarian and materialist outlook, he frequently attacked what he saw as Spain's blind emulation of European models and encouraged his co-nationals to revive their own local traditions. One of Ganivet's most passionate and sustained critiques of European modernity occurs in *Granada la Bella* (Ganivet 1896), a book that is both a paean to his native city and a damning assessment of the transformations imposed upon it in the name of modernization. The target of his ire is the subjection of the city to the homogenizing force of centralized state power—with its "*funesta simetria*" (terrible symmetry)—and the concomitant destruction of the city's rich local traditions. In its unrelenting application of a commercial and utilitarian calculus to all matters of urban renewal, the modern capitalist system had, in his view, largely effaced the spiritual and historical foundations that underlay Granada's unique form of life.

At the outset of *Granada la Bella*, Ganivet signals the approach he will follow to the city, one that sets aside the actual in order to seek out and give place to potentialities rooted in its past. "My Granada is not that of today," he notes in a sentence that could have been said by Calvino's Marco Polo, "it is a Granada that could and should be, though one I am uncertain will be" (Ganivet 1896, 1). Ganivet's Granada exists outside the homogenous, empty time of modernity, as an ideal space, distilled from historical materials, but only available through an act of imaginative, poetic recuperation. As the Italian historian Loretta Frattale observes in her comments on the book:

> Ganivet projects his Granadan ideal toward "another present," a parallel time without chronological or topological ties, a time *only possible* … In the interior of this space–time dimension without limits, or with only nuanced and confused limits, that polemically makes present times and places of the past and future, Ganivet animates a community formed "not only by the living, but by those who died and those who will be born," a world, therefore, set apart from history, that travels from the temporal to the eternal (Frattale 1997, 67–68, italics in the original).[9]

An act of imagination, certainly, though one hewing closely to the sensorium of the city, to the forms of experience it discloses to those, like Ganivet, attuned to its lost universals.

Thus, having just denounced the statistical and quantitative methods of modern state knowledge, he notes: "to see, hear, smell, taste, and even touch—that is, to live—is my exclusive method; afterward, these sensations organize themselves, and from that organization arise my ideas" (1896, 19). Ganivet was an admirer of the works of French psychologists Théodule-Armand Ribot and Pierre Janet, particularly these authors' elaboration of the Aristotelian notion of the synthetic or common sense (*sensus communis*).[10] Informed by Ribot and Janet's studies of disassociation, he understood that the loss of the synthetic sense within modern society meant that one could only engage the past in a static way, reproducing mechanically its traces but unable to vivify them in relation to a changing present. Thus, while Ganivet's was certainly indebted to idealism, he viewed ideation itself as a highly sensorial activity, with life as the self-integrated totality of sensory experience. In other words, the abstractions that characterize modernity, in Ganivet's view, also included a fixed, de-animated past (see Robles Egea 1997, 213—214).[11] This invocation of the senses, moreover, indicates how much Ganivet understood his own historical vision to be the product of a unique attunement to the city and its past, an attunement incompatible with the forms of knowledge authorized by the modern state.

Among scholars of nineteenth-century Spain, Ganivet is best known for his attempt to articulate a unique Spanish identity on the basis of a metaphysics of the Spanish spirit, "el genio espanol" (the Spanish genius). Yet, in *Granada la Bella* there is a consistent tension between two contrasting views of Spanish identity, one centered on a notion of a stable spiritual essence, and the other grounded in an irresolvable alterity produced by the historical circumstances that have molded the city. A pure Spanish identity at times appears to be more of an aspiration for Ganivet than an accomplished fact, or as a desire endlessly deferred. As he noted elsewhere, "We have had only periods lacking a unity of character: a Hispano-Roman period, another Hispano-Visigoth, another Hispano-Arab … But we have never had a purely Spanish period in which our spirit gave fruits in its own territory"(cited in de Michalena 2007, 201). That failure, however, that repeated deferral that Ganivet will find etched into his native city, turns out to be the source of Spain's unique value and the basis of its universal significance. Anticipating an interpretation of Spanish history and identity today associated with the work of Americo Castro, Ganivet finds Granada's unique form of life to be the result of a dynamic synthesis of diverse historical elements,

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FIG 5
An image of Granada's late-nineteenth-century modernization: the Gran Via.

for which the Islamic contribution has played a salient role. This synthesis, however, does not result in a seamless fusion. Rather, the spirit of Granadan existence celebrated in *Granada la Bella*—one imperiled by the modernization of the city[12]—embraces the so-called foreign elements via what Ganivet calls "an extremely delicate work of assimilation" (Ganivet 1896, 17) wherein they are transformed and incorporated while never losing some degree of their alterity (see Figure 5).

Take for example Ganivet's reflections on the composition of the Spanish soul, a topic he takes up, paradoxically, in the course of defining the unique historical matrix of Granada. According to Ganivet, the Spanish soul was in its essence mystical and individualist, forged from Senecan stoicism and developed through Christianity. This spiritual formation, however, turns out to have been profoundly marked by the influence of "*el arabigo*," the Arab element: "the mystic is the Spaniard, and Granadans are the most mystical of all the Spanish, for our Christian lineage but even more for our Arabic lineage" (Ganivet 1896, 17). This core of Spain, its mystical heart, in other words, has required Arabic culture and religiosity to become, in his words, "more refined and pure" (see also Frattale 1997, 66; Ganivet 1896, 17).

Elsewhere in *Granada la Bella*, *el arabigo* appears in the narrative as an intimate companion, bound to the life of Granada through a common philosophy of life. For example, in Ganivet's observations about Granadan domestic architecture, he suggests:

> In architecture, we began with the realization that one can not fight against reality; that however high we reached, we would always remain far below that which our land and sky afforded us. Artists of more imagination than we, the Arabs also did not struggle face to face, but rather hid in their houses, where they created an architecture of interiority. And thus, we also submit, and in this act of submission lies the soul of our art … our house

> [*carmen*] is a dove hidden in the forest, to use a phrase consecrated by the poets, and our city residence, our antique house, was not a place of appearances, of much facade and little depth: it was a house of the patio (Ganivet 1896, 30).

Ganivet introduces a caesura between two architectures, an "ours" and a "theirs" (the Arabs), bound together through a shared philosophical orientation but also by the fact they inhabit the same site in the same city: the *carmenes* mentioned here were originally constructed in the neighborhood of Albayzin during the Nasrid period of the fourteenth century. Etymologically, the word comes from the Arabic term "karm," or vineyard, in reference to the orchard or garden often enclosed within the *carmen*'s walls. Between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of these were rebuilt in the Romantic style dominant at the time. Ganivet's style of giving recognition to the Arab contribution to the lifeworld of the *carmen*, his gesture to the complex amalgam of borrowings and reinterpretations that have given it shape, exemplifies his vision of Granada's plural, relational form of identity.

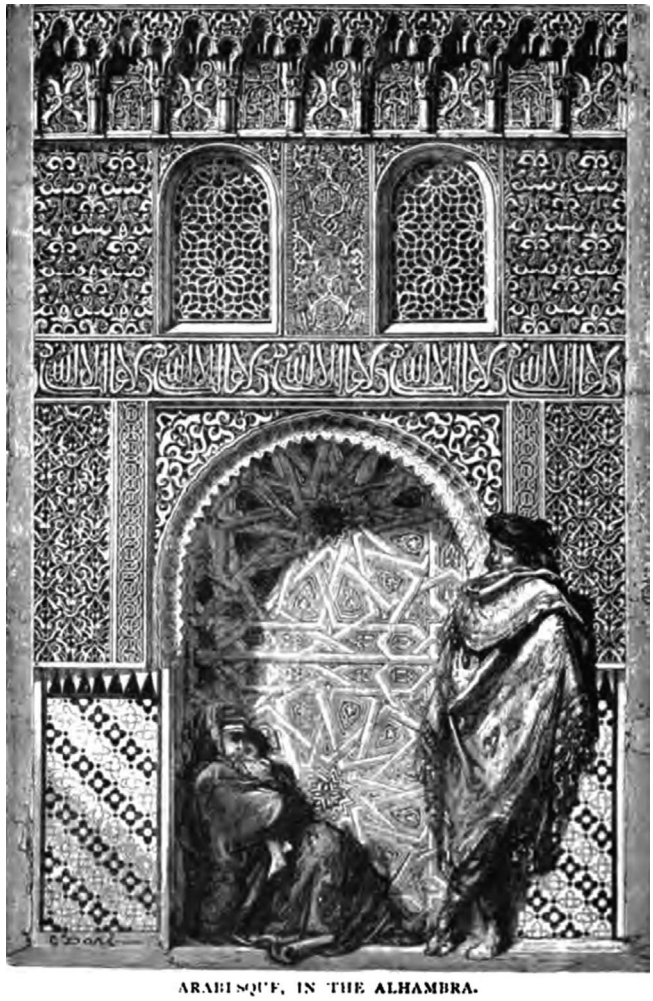
The Silence of the Alhambra

In his discussion of the significance of the Alhambra for Granada's tradition of monumental architecture one finds a similarly ambivalent formulation of the question of identity: "As for our monumental style, I doubt that it can be other than Arabic, not because it is ours, but for the fact that it is on top of us and all around us" (1896, 34). Here again, the identity Ganivet invokes is porous, having been opened to the outside by historical circumstance, specifically, the absorbing presence of the Alhambra. Instead of subsuming this complexity under a single overarching frame—the terrible symmetry of the modern nation state—Ganivet's Granada embraces its irreducible heterogeneity, the multiple genealogies, borrowings, amalgamations, and mimetic appropriations that have contributed to the unique form of the city.[13]

In another chapter of *Granada la Bella*, Ganivet criticizes a popular perception, encouraged by Orientalist fashion, that exoticizes the Alhambra as a fantasy palace, one where only "lullabies of sensuality" are heard (see Figure 6). The Moorish ruins, he suggests, have a more profound story to tell, one of greatness, certainly, but even more of sadness and death, of the calamitous demise of the city's previous inhabitants:

> It is universally thought that the Alhambra is an Eden, an ethereal Moorish castle, where one lives in perpetual festivity. How can we understand that this castle was inspired by faith, one to be respected even if not shared, and was the theater of great

FIG 6
Inside the Alhambra, a view of the arabesques, before the age of mass tourism.



ARABESQUE, IN THE ALHAMBRA.

> sorrows, of sorrow of an agonizing domination? The destiny of greatness is to be misunderstood: there are still those who on visiting the Alhambra believe they hear the flattery and lullabies of sensuality, and don't feel the profound sadness that emanates from the deserted palace, abandoned by its builders, imprisoned in the impalpable threads woven by the spirit of destruction, that invisible spider whose feet are dreams (1896, 35).

For Ganivet, this tragic demise, still echoing from the ruins of the Nasrid fortress that dominates the city, imparts a distinct mood to its forms of experience, and thus, to the poetry that expresses its unique vision.[14] His narrative style, here and in other writings, seeks to reattune the historical sensibilities of his readership to both the monument and the city it defines, disrupting the Orientalizing gaze that holds them captive and that confines their significance to moments of private fantasy and aesthetic pleasure.

This criticism of the reigning perceptual grid through which the Alhambra is interpreted, as a place of "perpetual festivity," stands in line with a long history of debate over the status and meaning of the monument. As Barbara Fuchs has insightfully explored, during the sixteenth century, questions about the status of Morisco and Moorish culture converged at times on the Alhambra. What would the palace come to stand for in the post-1492 context? What past would it bear witness to and what future would it harken and gesture toward? As the campaign to erase traces of Islam from language, art, custom, and architecture grew more intense in the years following the fall of Granada, a trend that was paralleled by the increasing persecution of the Moriscos, questions about the significance and value of the Alhambra were posed and answered from various quarters (Fuchs 2011, 48—50). Francisco Nunez Muley, a Morisco advocate during the latter part of the sixteenth century, argued that the preservation of the Alhambra and other testaments to Moorish culture, in demonstrating the great achievements of the Moors, would only increase the stature and value of those who had conquered them. Fuchs reads Nunez Muley's intervention as an attempt to find a place for Moorish culture within the new Christian order in a context where the status of the contemporary representatives of that cultural formation, the Moriscos, were facing the looming threat of total expulsion. From the point of view of Granada's new Christian rulers, the Alhambra was to bear witness not to the Moorish culture they had defeated, but to their own triumph. Thus the Alhambra was one element within a broader cultural politics concerned about the implications of emergent notions of Spanish identity for the Moriscos.

For Ganivet, writing centuries later, it is no longer the status of the Moriscos as a living population facing the threat of expulsion that is at stake. Rather, it is the dead whose status is in danger, the long extinguished inhabitants of the city whose ghostly presence is imperiled by the exoticization of the world they created and left behind. In multiple writings, Ganivet identifies the Alhambra with ruination and death, with the voices of the now-entombed dead rising up from the stones to impart their eternal wisdom.

In one piece, "The Ruins of Granada," set three thousand years in the future, an artist and a wise man (*un sabio*) travel together to visit the ruins of Granada, destroyed by a volcano many centuries prior. For the wise man, the embodiment of a scientific perspective, the destroyed city offers up the possibility of encountering a civilization frozen in time, the "petrification of life itself, as it then existed" (Ganivet [1899] 1961, 206). For the artist, in contrast, this "vision of the archaeologist" fails to discern the living memory or ideal embodied in the

fragmented remains of the city. He, instead, does not discover among the ruins "a petrification of life, but rather, another form of life, one for which mankind is no longer necessary, in which the idea lives and speaks in the air, inspired by the poetry that springs forth from the ruins" ([1899] 1961, 206). The past lives on in the present, though as "another form of life," one whose "fecund experience" allows it to "explain great secrets" to those who will listen ([1899] 1961, 205). Within the chronotope Ganivet articulates, the voice of the Moorish past reverberates outward from its stony grave for those with the poetic sensibility to listen. As the poet sits at the *ideofono*, an ebony box that sings when animated by the user's thoughts and expressions, we hear:

> How silently you sleep
> Towers of the Alhambra
> A dream of long centuries
> Slips along your walls
> You sleep, dreaming in death
> And death is far away
> Awake, for already are drawing near
> The new lights of dawn (Ganivet [1899] 1961, 209).

Notes for an Andalusian Politics

Toward the end of his life, Ganivet participated regularly in a literary salon made up of Granadan poets and artists. The group was known as the Cofradia del Avellano due to the location of their gatherings, on the Fuente de Avellano Street, just below the Palacio de Generalife, the beautiful summer palace of the Nasrid Kings. In 1899, just a few months after Ganivet's suicide, the remaining members of the group composed a letter to the "Moors of Morocco" reminding them that Granada was still their home and inviting them to visit should they ever desire to do so.[15] This gesture, one that has been repeated many times in different forms by Andalusistas over the last hundred years, has often been dismissed as little more than romantic whimsy, one fueled by the maurophilic fashion of the day. In contrast, when the Spanish government, in 2015, passed a law offering Spanish citizenship to descendants of the Sephardic Jews expelled from Iberia in the fifteenth century, this gesture was not viewed as a flight of romantic fancy. The text of the law, rather, emphasized the continuity of historical memory for Spain's medieval Jewish population: "In truth, the Jewish presence in Iberian lands was firm and ancient, palpable even today in vestiges of word and stone."[16] The law granting the right of Jews to acquire Spanish citizenship, a law that "repairs the injustice committed 500 years ago" (*El Pais*, June 11, 2015), according to the Spanish Minister of Justice, Rafael Catala, is grounded in the presence

of Spanish words still tinged with their Hebrew roots and in the crumbling medieval synagogues that draw thousands of tourists to the ancient *Juderias* of Cordoba and Girona. Those words and stones speak, of both greatness and destruction, and hold contemporary Spaniards accountable for the story they tell. The voice of the Islamic past, in contrast, speaks today to many only as the phantom whispers of a ghost. Ganivet's writing, in this light, stands as an attempt to amplify those whispers, as sounds and stories vital to the ethical life of a society then in erosion under the impact of what he saw to be a misguided Europeanizing ambition.

I had mentioned that Ganivet's concern was with the dead, but it embraced the living as well. For his critique of European modernity also included a harsh judgment on its colonial enterprises. Having taken up a post as Spanish Vice Consul in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1892, Ganivet had become increasing interested in—and critical of—King Leopold's colonial occupation of the Congo, an occupation that, in his view, sought to hide its cruelty and purely exploitative motives under banners of heroism and philanthropy (see Ginsberg 1985, 49). He soon came to see this ruthless utilitarianism as a feature characteristic of all of Europe's colonial practices, including Spain's. In his satirical novel, *La conquista del Maya por el ultimo conquistador español: Pio Cid* (*The conquest of the Maya by the last Spanish conqueror: Pio Cid*), Ganivet dissected with acerbic wit the racism, brutality, and bald economic self-interest hiding behind the European civilizing mask.[17]

Although Ganivet expressed skepticism that any colonial enterprise could avoid degenerating into brutal forms of domination, in his later writings his views became far more ambivalent (see Alcantud 1997; Martin-Marquez 2008). Like many of the Spanish intellectuals of his generation, Ganivet came to argue that Spain should at some point in the future seek to secure a colonial presence on the African continent, both to revitalize Spanish political culture and, even more urgent, to respond to French colonial expansion in North Africa. Spain, in his view, was to be the pioneer of a more benign form of colonialism, founded not on military, political, and economic domination, but shared interests within the framework of a broad Hispanic civilization (see Blinkhorn 1980, 15). Many writers and politicians interested in promoting Spanish colonialism in Africa from the late nineteenth century through the Franco period emphasized the historical linkages between Spain and North Africa as a justification for their own civilizing mission, though their ambivalence toward this project eventually led a number of them to give their support to independence movements in Morocco and elsewhere. Ganivet's own statements on this topic were similarly ambivalent, indeed, contradictory, though a profound skepticism of the colonial enterprise

can be found throughout his writings. This skepticism—one dimension of Ganivet's broader critique of European arrogance, its claim to superiority—bears witness to what can be called a Granadan sensibility, the result of a practice of finding one's place in a world of multiple and complex parentage.

In saying this, however, I am not suggesting that this sensibility, exemplified in Ganivet's life and work, is more genuinely Granadan than other ways of experiencing the city, including those, for example, grounded in the positivist historical stance that Ganivet so despised. Rather, Ganivet should be seen as an early and key proponent of one particular practice of attuning the senses to the Granadan cityscape, of establishing its temporal order, the way in which certain aspects of its present articulate with aspects of its past (not all), and in doing so, "giving space" to possible futures (again, not all).

For many Spaniards today, however, this Andalucista sensibility, despite its apparent commitment to a pluralist ethic, remains far too beholden to an old Spanish obsession with origins, identities, and essences, an obsession whose darkest moments extend from the Inquisition to the nationalist fervor of the Civil War. Andalucista claims about the historical identity of the nation have at times been seen as little more than a variant (if not an outright component) of *nacionalismo católico* (Catholic nationalism), an interpretation strengthened by the association of some Arabists and Andalucistas with the fascist regime (e.g. Emilio Garcia Gomez, Gil Benumeya) as well as with the Catholic church (e.g. Miguel Asin Palacios). The invocation of Arabic roots, in this view, too easily collapses into an ideological weapon whose liabilities far outweigh its virtues, evident in the far from forgotten deployment of that weapon by Franco's fascist regime. Indeed, throughout the period of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco, from 1912 to 1956, Spanish governments continuously drew on the Romantic discourse of *hispanidad*—as a common civilizational (for some, racial) identity, uniting Spain with North Africa—in order to give legitimacy to their colonial occupation.[18] Moreover, Andalucista claims easily awaken painful memories of Spain's relegation to the status of "oriental other" by its European neighbors to the north, fears heightened by its current financial woes that again threaten to confine it to the margins of the European economic system. In short, these fears, provoked today by the inheritors and proponents of a Ganivetian perspective, find their origins within recent Spanish historical experience.

The tradition of ethical and political reflection that Ganivet and his city helped initiate, however, remains an active force within a variety of practices and institutions in southern Spain today. Its influence is evident in the proliferation of associations and advocacy groups emphasizing the contemporary

importance of Andalusia's Moorish and Jewish heritage for the task of finding a place for Muslim immigrants within Europe today. Contemporary Andalucistas continue to find in Granada a European city whose spiritual and aesthetic contours owe much to the non-European presence that inhabits and inflects it; a presence that leaves it disjointed from itself in such a way as to open up a space of critical reflection on European modernity and its colonial practices. As I have argued here, it is wrong to assimilate this tradition of reflection either to the heritage industry or to the political imperatives of a regional nationalism, though both of these entwined projects have served as incitements in its development and beneficiaries of its fruits. Guided by a sensibility attuned to the constitutive force that Arabo-Islamic and Jewish traditions and forms exerted on Granada, these neo-Ganivetians continue to elaborate perspectives that resist the polarities that counterpose Spain to the Middle East, a superior civilization to an inferior one. This sensibility works on the borders between Spain, Europe, and the Middle East, continuously reweaving the fabric of possible relations across times and regions into usable forms of reflection, practice, and critique.

notes and references

[1] Useful discussions of the perspectives of Andalucismo are found in Gonzalez Alcantud (2014), Doubleday and Coleman (2008), and Martinez Montalvez (2011).

[2] Recent critiques of Andalucista writings are found in Fanjul (2004), Marin (2009), and Sanjuan (2013).

[3] The anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis observes a similar phenomenon in regard to contemporary Greek society: "The notions of authenticity and inauthenticity are symbiotic concepts that equally repress and silence non-contemporaneous and discordant cultural experiences and sensibilities. Thus the modernist critic would look at Greek society and dismiss any residues and incongruities emanating from the pre-modern as both romantic and invented. In both cases, static impositions of the polarity authentic/inauthentic led to the dismissal of important discontinuous cultural systems and sensibilities that have been repositioned within the modern as non-synchronous elements" (Seremetakis 1994, 17).

[4] Gonzalez Alcantud has emphasized the value of an anthropological notion of myth for elucidating many of the current discourses on the Andalusian past. His work in this regard is meant as a rejoinder to those who dismiss such writings as simply failed attempts at historical truth. See Gonzalez Alcantud (2014).

[5] Above, I highlighted the importance of the "Moorish past" in the configuration of Granada. The term "Moor" is commonly used to designate the Muslim population of medieval Iberia, though it also has a range of other uses. It is worth asking why scholars continue the practice of referring to this population as Moors instead of Muslims. While the term was indeed used during the medieval period, it was not used by Muslims themselves, but applied to them by their Christian adversaries. One obvious impetus for the ongoing recourse to the term is

that it establishes a breach between medieval Muslims and contemporary practitioners of Islam, thereby deepening the trench between modern Spain and the societies of the Middle East. In this essay I have opted to use both terms, Muslim and Moor, interchangeably.

[6] This Romantic engagement with elements of Spain's past, including the period of Moorish rule, was one in a long series of such returns. In the 1820s and -30s Spanish literary writers had explored tensions between contemporary Catholic traditionalism and liberal social and political trends through a novelistic genre that staged tragic tales of love between noble Moorish women, embodiments of human passion, and pious Christian knights (Blackshaw 2011). Ganivet's reflections on the Moorish contribution to Spain, however, are of a different sort, colored by Romantic and Orientalist perspectives but also departing from these traditions.

[7] Useful treatments of Ganivet's life and works are found in Beneyto (1999), Ginsberg (1985), and; Gonzalez Alcantud (1997).

[8] Ganivet's strongest statement of this point is found in his *Idearium Español* (Ganivet [1897] 2013).

[9] As Frattale notes, Ganivet articulates a chronotope that: "enacts a convergence, in an emblematic contraposition between a 'here' and a 'beyond,' elements of real experience (history, the quotidian, technology, commerce, urbanism, and industry) and reflection (ideas, dreams, art, values, and myths) (Frattale 1997, 68).

[10] See Heller-Roazen (2009) for a discussion of Janet and Ribot's reworking of Aristotle's' idea of *sensus communis*.

[11] Ganivet discusses the importance of Ribot and Janet for his critique of Spanish indolence (*abulia*) in his letters from *Cartas Finlandeses* (Finish Letters) (Ganivet 1906, 162—172). See also Robles Egea (1997).

[12] Ganivet is particularly critical of the decision by Granada's municipal authorities to cover over the river that runs through the town. Water, he suggests, has a kind of spiritual significance for Granadans, a view that echoes the importance given to flowing water within Arabic architectural traditions. He also sharply criticizes the destruction brought about by the widening of streets, and the use of awnings that block the sunlight from reaching those in the streets.

[13] Ganivet's Granada carries many of the characteristics of what John Milbank has described in relation to gothic space. See Milbank (1997).

[14] Much has been written on the theme of Andalusian melancholy, and of Granada as a sad town. An insightful analysis of the historical genesis of this sentiment from the late nineteenth century to the present, and of the place of Ganivet in its development, is found in Miguel Angel Garcia's *Melancholia Vertebrada* (Garcia 2012).

[15] For a discussion of this letter, see Alcantud (2014, 56).

[16] The cited passage is found in the first preamble of the law 12/2015 passed on the 24th June, 2015, regarding the concession of Spanish nationality to Sephardic Jews.

[17] In letter to a friend written in 1893, he suggested that Africa had the capacity to become a mighty competitor of Europe and perhaps to surpass it as a world leader (Ginsberg 1985, 52). According to Ganivet, just as Europe had developed largely on the basis of ideas received from Asia (many via al-Andalus), so might Africa appropriate and develop ideas drawn from Europe.

[18] On the political ideology of Spanish colonialism in North Africa, see Nogué and Villanova (1999) and Huguet Santos (1999).

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